

Response Paper to the Video:

The New Chimpanzees

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Bonobos and chimpanzees are so similar to each other that the former was called for a long time only “pygmy chimpanzees”. Considering though that its body size is the same or only slightly less than one of the 3 chimpanzee species the word “pygmy” is misleading. Admittedly it is smaller though than the other two species. The center of gravity in the bonobo’s body is lower. This makes it possible to stand more erect and walk bipedally (on two feet). Bonobos have longer limbs (relative to trunk length) and their build is generally more slender and graceful than chimpanzees. Looking at the picture the most visible difference between a chimpanzee and a bonobo is in their facial pigmentation. The latter’s facial skin is darkly pigmented, while the former’s is closer to human skin color. Same applies to their ears.

Bonobos live in one particular region of Africa, south of the Congo River in its river basin. The country was formerly called Zaire, but now known as Congo. Their habitat bonobo is primarily the crowns and the shrub levels of the lowland rain forests. Its lifestyle is more arboreal than other African apes including the chimpanzees. The three subspecies of chimpanzees (Eastern, Central, and Western Common Chimpanzee) all live in the rainforests. The variation in their habitat includes that the Eastern one can live in dry savannahs too, the Central one in open woodland forests, and the Western one even at higher altitudes, up to 2000 meters.

Both the bonobos and the chimpanzees walk quadrupedally in a special position called knuckle-walking. They use this locomotion both on the ground and on the trees. Both species can walk bipedally, but as demonstrated on the class it is not very comfortable for them and takes much more energy. Chimpanzees stand up and walk bipedally though during aggression displays. Both species is also capable of and do prohibit suspensory behavior on the trees.

Both species are primarily frugivorous, they eat fruits. Bonobos are known to eat over 100 types of plants over a course of a year, while the chimpanzees over 300. Hunting is much more

characteristic for chimpanzees that were observed to kill and consume antelopes, pigs, duikers, and even other monkeys. In contrast the most common vertebrates the bonobos are the flying squirrels and the duikers and they would never hunt other monkeys. Bonobos also have been observed to slap water up from a stream and eat either invertebrates or fish.

Tool usage is much more common and sophisticated among the chimps than bonobos. The former use sticks to gather insects. They also use tools to open nuts, which as demonstrated in the video is not a simple task. A few other tools chimpanzees may use: leaf-sponge, leaf-mop, algae-scoop, anvil-prop, nut-hammer, bee-probe, lever open. Bonobos on the other hand have rarely observed using tools in the wild (though they do learn how to use tools in captivity).

Chimps live in groups of dominance hierarchy, where the males are generally dominant over females. Any certain individuals place in the hierarchy is fought for through violent and or violent looking actions. Males compete with each to attain higher positions. The reward for higher position is more access to females for reproductive purposes. Beside aggression through they display a whole range of other social behavior including kissing, hugging, bowing, extending the hand. And let's not forget about the importance of grooming that has an important role in maintaining social cohesion. The bonobo subgroups are generally multimale, bisexual groups with matrifocal subunits Most of the grooming bouts and instances of food sharing occur between males and females. Also the female-female relationship is much stronger than it is for chimps.

The bonobos sexual behavior became quite infamous through out anthropomorphic lens. Their sexual activity is not limited to the opposite sex. Unlike all other primate species, the estrus signals are almost always present in the females; in other words they are always receptive. Sexual activity does not only serve reproduction but other purposes in their communication and the motivation for it maybe just as much psychological. It prevents violence and eases tension. And they may just use sex as greeting ritual, signaling reconciliation or proceeding food sharing.